

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 04880 081325Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 HEW-04 CA-01
L-03 VO-03 INSE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /052 W
-----000189 081533Z /45

R 081215Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8942
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 4880

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, SHUM, PORG, SN
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE OFFER OF ISLAND FOR BOAT CASE REFUGEES

REF: SINGAPORE 4764

1. UNHCR REGIONAL REP SAMPATKUMAR CALLED ON AMBASSADOR
AFTERNOON NOVEMBER 4 TO DISCUSS PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW'S
OFFER OF SMALL ISLAND AS STAGING AREA FOR TRANSITING INDO-
CHINESE BOAT CASE REFUGEES.

2. SAMPATKUMAR SAID THAT HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED REPLY TO HIS
OCTOBER 27 LETTER (RETEL REQUESTING MEETING WITH SINGAPORE HOME
MINISTRY ACTING PERM SEC TO DISCUSS OFFER. HE HAD, HOWEVER,
MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY PERM SEC CHIA CHEONG FOOK REGARDING OFFER.
CHIA HAD INFORMED HIM THAT HOME MINISTRY WAS ACTION AGENCY ON THIS
MATTER. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT SPECIFY WHICH PARTICULAR ISLAND SIN-
GAPOREANS HAD IN MIND, HE INDICATED THAT GOS WAS THINKING ABOUT
A FACILITY THAT WOULD ACCOMMODATE ABOUT 300 REFUGEES. PARTLY
AS A BARGAINING PLOY, SAMPATKUMAR SUGGESTED THAT THIS NUMBER
WOULD BE INSUFFICIENT AND THAT 500 WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE.

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3. ACCORDING TO SAMPATKUMAR, CHIA HAD STRESSED TO HIM THAT WHAT
GOS REQUIRED FROM UNHCR WAS A "BANKABLE GUARANTEE" REGARDING THE
REFUGEES. SAMPATKUMAR HAD NOT UNDERSTOOD JUST WHAT CHIA MEANT BY
THIS TERM. HE SAID HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO EARLY MEETING WITH
HOME MINISTRY PERM SEC, AND HE HOPED EMBASSY WOULD DO ALL IT
COULD TO SUPPORT HIM IN THE MATTER.

4. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR SAMPATKUMAR'S BRIEFING AND SAID HE HOPED UNHCR WOULD KEEP US CLOSELY INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS. WHILE WE WANTED TO BE AS HELPFUL AS POSSIBLE, WE FELT IT IMPORTANT THAT USG NOT BE BROUGHT INTO AREA OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN GOS AND UNHCR. IT WAS UNHCR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK OUT AGREEMENT WITH SINGAPOREANS ON THIS ISSUE, AND WE WISHED TO AVOID DIRECT U.S. INVOLVEMENT. WE WOULD, HOWEVER, INSURE SINGAPOREANS WERE FULLY AWARE THAT HE STRONGLY FAVORED CONCLUSION OF AN EARLY AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOS AND UNHCR TO ESTABLISH THE FACILITY, BUT BALL WAS DEFINITELY IN UNHCR'S COURT. SAMPATKUMAR INDICATED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS.

5. AMBASSADOR LATER HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS MATTER BRIEFLY WITH PERM SEC CHIA AT EVENING FUNCTION. CHIA EXPLAINED THAT WHAT HE MEANT BY "BLANKABLE GUARANTEE" WAS IRONCLAD UNDERSTAKING ON PART UNHCR THAT REFUGEES WOULD BE MOVED THROUGH PROPOSED SINGAPORE FACILITY AT REASONABLE RATE OF SPEED --PERHAPS THREE MONTHS MAXIMUM-- AND THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD IT BE PERMITTED TO BECOME PERMANENT REFUGEE CAMP. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT SUDDEN THAI SHIFT TOWARD LESS ACCOMMODATING POLICY ON REFUGEES HAD BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY SHARP INCREASE IN FLOW OF REFUGEES WHO HAD HEARD ABOUT NEW U.S. PROGRAM TO ACCEPT 15,000 VIETNAMESE AND WANTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT. GOS WAS ANXIOUS THAT PROPOSED SINGAPORE FACILITY NOT BE SIMILARLY SWAMPED, CHIA SAID, SO PRIME MINISTER LEE WAS INSISTING THAT THERE BE NO PUBLICITY ABOUT IT. AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT GOS AND UNHCR COULD COME TO A

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MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT SOON.
HOLDRIDGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, SEA RESCUES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 08-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770412-0434
Format: TEL
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771183/aaaactfe.tel
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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TAGS: SREF, SHUM, PORG, SN
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